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A Christmas Ditty

FOR

THE FENIANS.

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TORONTO:

1867.

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BIDDY O'FLAHERTY'S SORROW: A CHRISTMAS DITTY

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SCENE.—*A back kitchen. Biddy and her companions, seated round a table, comfort their hearts with a drop of the crayther, while she relates the story of her grief.*

AIR—*Rory O'More.*

Here's a health to the sons of St. Patrick's green isle,
May her flowers ever bloom, and her skies ever smile ;
May her children be true, both at home and afar,
And their hearts kindly warm to ould Erin go bragh.

'Tis long that they've pitied her sorrowful case,
Down-trod and oppressed by the proud Saxon race ;
And now that they're called their ould mother to free,
To be sure neither laggards nor cowards they'll be.

Och ! but what do I say,—I've a story to tell,
Makes my bosom with shame and with sorrow to swell ;
My eyes fill with tears, and I tremble all o'er,
When I think my own Pat I shall never see more.

It was early one morn in the spring of last year,
I was waked out of sleep by a sound in my ear ;
Betwixt sleeping and waking I wasn't quite sure
If it might be a step or a tap at the door.

I rose to my elbow and listened again,
I rubbed both my eyes and I shook up my brain,
I turned to the window, and what should I see,
But my own darling Patrick a-looking at me.

I jumped to my feet and was soon in my clothes,
I minded not slippers or stockings or hose ;
I pushed up the sash, and I put out my head,
And the first thing we did—sure it needn't be said.

It was yellow and red where the sun was to rise,
A dull leaden gray to the west met my eyes ;
The robins were singing all round on the trees,
And the chill morning air made my dear Patrick sneeze.

Dear Biddy, says he, I have waked you too soon,
But I've come in great haste to request a small boon ;
I hope you'll excuse, bein' its all for the cause,
To set free the ould country, our people and laws.

Last night Michael Halleren called at the door,
But refused in his haste to set foot on the floor,
And says he, Brother Pat, sure you shouldn't be here,
For the boys are all mustered, and sipping their beer.

I rose and went with him to where they were met,
Lynch, O'Brien and Roberts, and all the whole set ;
And we sat ourselves down on the first seat was near,
And right welcome, like brothers, partook of their cheer.

There were spaches and songs, and good whisky galore,
Until all had enough, and many had more,
And with cheers three times three, and a bumper for home,
'Twas resolved that the time now for action had come.

It was ordered that all who'd a heart in the cause,
Who hated proud England, her Queen, and her laws,
Should muster and march by the first peep of day,
To strike the first blow, and begin the affray.

And now, my dear Biddy, sure its cruel to tell,
That for a few days I must bid you farewell ;
One kiss, dear, at parting,—and if you could spare it,
A dollar or two with a friend would you share it ?

'Tis all for the ould land, and whin we get there,
We'll have lashions of money to spend and to spare ;
Most beautiful ribbons, and silks green and blue,
I'll gather, mavourneen, in acres for you.

Sure what could I do but give all that I had,
It was only ten dollars I had hid from my dad ;
It was Patrick that asked, the ould country to free,
And was it not gathered for him and for me ?

But how could I part with my own Patrick dear ;
He pressed me to his heart with a sigh and a tear ;
He called me his own, and devoured me with kisses :
Och ! to feel once again what of courting the bliss is.

But just then we were startled by the beat of a drum,
A sign that his time for to lave me had come ;
A hug and a kiss and the sweet drame was o'er--
We parted : alas ! shall we ever meet more ?

I turned into bed and endeavoured to sleep,
But still to my heart Pat's sweet image would creep ;
I saw him and the boys march along on their way,
While the fifes and the bugles did merrily play.

In my drame, as they marched every man with his gun,
There was shouting and cheering, and plenty of fun ;
There was whisky and gin, but they didn't long last,
Tho' the bottles were filled every inn that they passed.

My own generous Pat was the life of the crowd,
No song was so sweet, and no voice was so loud ;
He carried the bottle and handed it round,
And his health, from the boys, made the echoes resound.

And when money began his bould comrades to fail,
His purse was aye ready for one and for all ;
And the dollars I gave him—good luck to his heart—
As free as he got them, as free did they part.

But dollars, like drames, never last very long,
With brave Irish lads singing sweet Irish songs ;
For the last bottle was dry and the last dollar gone
Ere I woke from my vision, and found it was one.

It was lonely and cheerless to think of my dear,
My cheeks wet with tears and my heart full of fear ;
My thoughts to my fate sure 'twas sore to resign,
Perhaps he might niver return to be mine.

Dull and slowly the hours o'er my heavy heart rolled,
But no tidings came back of the Finnigans bold ;
But a whisper went round, no one knew how it ran,
That the boys had been taken and **shot to a man.**

Nare a one would believe it, but **every one feared**,
They couldn't tell why, 'twas the truth they had **heard** ;
And the stories they told of the redcoats' defeat
Found none to receive them, and **few to repeat.**

Such fears and forebodings were hard to endure,
'Twas a sickness of heart which no physic could cure ;
I trembled for Patrick, did penance and prayed,
That he needed it all I was sorely afraid.

I thought of him hungry and weary and cold,
Sick, wounded and faint, without victuals or gold ;
And och ! could I bear it—stretched stiff on the ground,
In my drames his dead body I thought I had found.

But some change must take place, for this couldn't long last,
Since the brothers first left us many days had now passed ;
When one night as I sat by the fire on the floor,
I was roused by a step and a tap at the door.

I started and opened to see who was there,
With a fear and a hope for my own Patrick dear ;
But och ! my heart sank when I looked in his face,
It was only Mike Hall ren with Peter O'Trac

Sure then, Michael, says I, is it you that is here ?
And what have you done with sweet Patrick McClear.
Dear Biddy, says he, I have bad news to tell,
But keep up your brave heart, for your Patrick is well.

We met with the boys and we crossed o'er the river,
Bould O'Neil at our head, brave and dauntless as ever ;
Our hearts thrilled with joy as we stepped on the shore,
And the green flag before us triumphantly bore.

On all red-coats and jackets swift vengeance we vowed,
And without opposition we marched on so proud ;
That the country was ours, sure what else could we think,
What chiefly we wanted was victuals and drink.]

But we thought in our hearts, and we whispered it round,
That a day would soon come when these too should be
found ;
What a time we should have when the fighting was o'er,
And Kinnidy all in the Finnigans' power.

What with whisky and gould, and potatoes and beef,
Just to think of them only was then a relief ;
With fine clothes for the taking, and ribbons of green,
For our sisters and sweethearts—och ! would it had been.

Being hungry and cowld, we were eager to fight,
We stormed and we swore, and we vowed to have right ;
But the night passed away without fighting or bread,
And sure they were hard—the cowld stones, for a bed.

Next day we got news of the Kinnidy boys,
When O'Neil made a speech and the men made a noise ;
For ould Ireland and freedom we shouted anew,
And we swore to her honour and rights to be true.

But cheers without bread are weak, heartless and cold,
For 'tis eating and drink makes an Irishman bold ;
And our hearts failed within us to think of the strife,
The loss of good limbs, and the risk of sweet life.

In the midst of this bother the word was passed round
That the redcoats were coming our men to surround,
That the rig'lars alone numbered three to our one,
And that for our boys e'er a chance there was none.

There was swearing and swagger, and bustle and fun,
Some stood to their arms, some attempted to run ;
Bould O'Neil made a speech, but it didn't much plase us,
For he vowed the first coward he'd cut him to paices.

It was when he was coaxin' our men to be true
That the Kinnidy volunteers first came in view ;
Calm, steady and cool, and with step firm and light,
Like tried veteran heroes they marched to the fight.

Our hearts faster beat, and our cheeks grew more wan,
We looked round for shelter and some of us ran ;
We fired a few shots, but they passed without harm,
For the sight of the red jackets worked like a charm.

Still steady and on marched the brave volunteers,
At the sight of our boys they gave three hearty cheers,
Then into our ranks poured their shot thick and fast,
Like hail on the wings of the quick-driving blast.

Och ! but then there was hurry and bother and fear,
Ev'ry Fenian skedaddled to what shelter was near ;
There were wounded and dying, and crippled and lame,
And our brave Irish boys saw the last of the game.

Mike O'Connor and Patrick stood both by my side,
And we all ran together when the time came to hide ;
But Pat, as he ran, some one struck from behind,
And they took him a pris'ner, and keep him confined.

And now its all o'er, and the boys have come here,
At laste such as managed to get themselves clear ;
There are plenty of pris'ners, but none of them ours,
And the battle of Ridgeway is lost,—by the powers.

Now, dear Biddy, says he, by myself be advised,
Don't take on that your Patrick should be so surprised ;
There are scores of our boys on the trial will swear,
That niver an inch of his body was there.

Och ! but Michael, says I, by that time I'm in fright
That the murtherin villains will be killin' him quite ;
Thin sure there's no danger on that score, says he,
They'd have too much to do, were that same goin' to be.

With this bit of comfort I dried up my tears,
Bade Michael good night, and in sleep drowned my fears ;
But about my dear Patrick, whether living or dead,
To this day not a word has been written or said.

This was Biddy's sad tale, as she sat by the fire,
With Kitty and Nancy and Lucy Maguire ;
With a drop of the crayther their poor hearts to cheer,
And a nice bit to ate of whatever was near.

They chatted and mused o'er the sorrowful story,
Pitied Biddy's sad fate, crowned bold Patrick with glory ;
They praised the brave boys and bespoke them success,
If the dear holy Prastes the good cause would but bless.

As they tasted, and talked of the ould country's wrongs,
To freedom, the right, to herself that belongs,
The door gently opened, and who should be there,
But Biddy's own darling, lost Patrick McClear.

There was fainting and screaming and kissing galore,
And Patrick explained why he'd not been before ;
Says Biddy—dear Patrick, what will you do, then,
Och ! says Patrick, I think I'll not try it again.